

Using Turnitin and Interpreting Similarity Reports

Student Guide | December 2021



THE UNIVERSITY
of ADELAIDE

What is Turnitin?

Turnitin is a text-matching software.

It generates a similarity report by comparing student submissions to published works, web content, and a library of student assignments across the globe.

If there are occurrences where a student's writing is similar to, or matches, one of the database sources, then Turnitin highlights this for review.



How is Turnitin used at the University of Adelaide?

When you submit a written assignment in MyUni, it is automatically run through Turnitin.

This generates a similarity report, which highlights where the submitted writing matches that of other sources on the database.

When your tutor marks your work, they can see this similarity report and review it where required.



How is Turnitin used at the University of Adelaide?

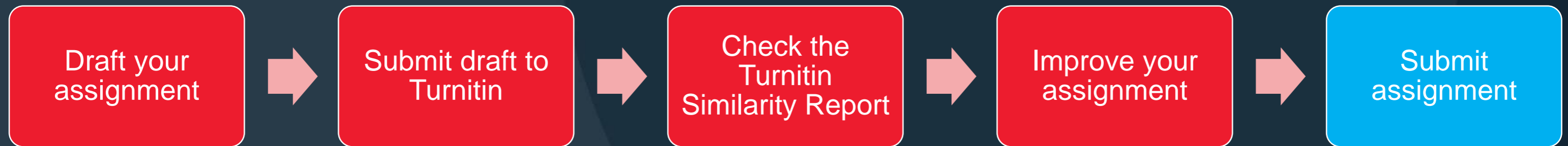
Turnitin is not a plagiarism detector.

However, you can use Turnitin to help you review your work for academic integrity and good academic writing.



This guide will help you to understand Turnitin and use it to improve your assessments and work with integrity.

How should I use Turnitin?




How do I access Turnitin?

You can use the **Turnitin Originality Check course** in MyUni before submitting your assignments.

This course is separate from your assignment submission and can be used at any time.

Turnitin Originality Check



[→ Submit Here](#) [📖 How to Submit](#)

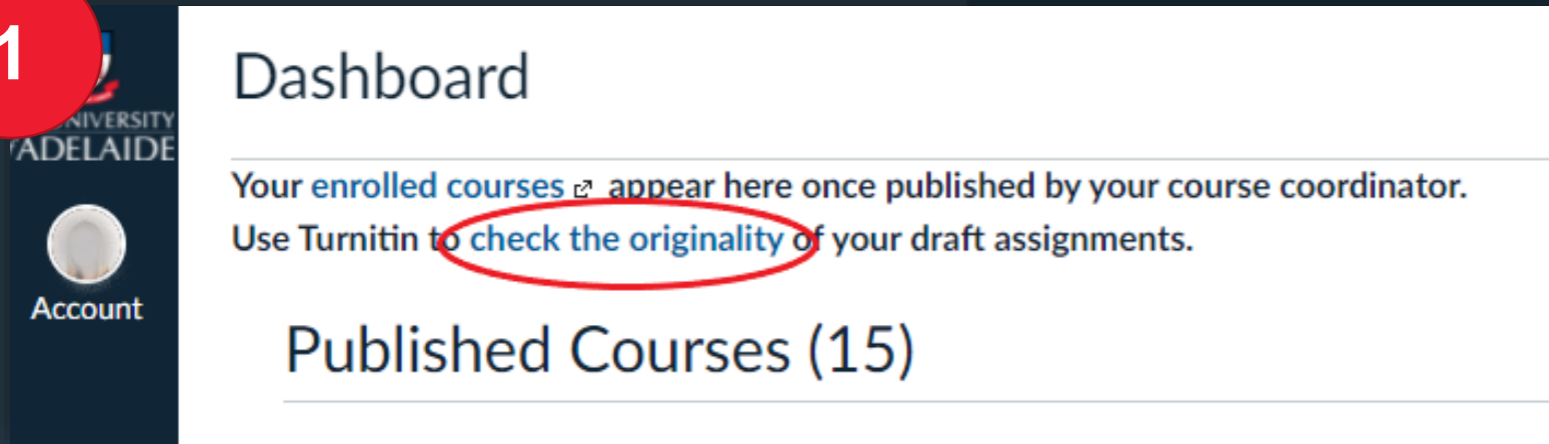
[+ Enroll in the Latest Iteration of the Turnitin Originality Checker](#)

This course allows you to check the originality of your assignments.
You **CANNOT** submit your assignments through this course. You can only check your drafts for originality.
Your uploads here are not stored so that they do not effect the originality of your final submissions.

Turnitin Originality Check Course

Find the Turnitin Originality Check course on your MyUni dashboard by following these steps.

1

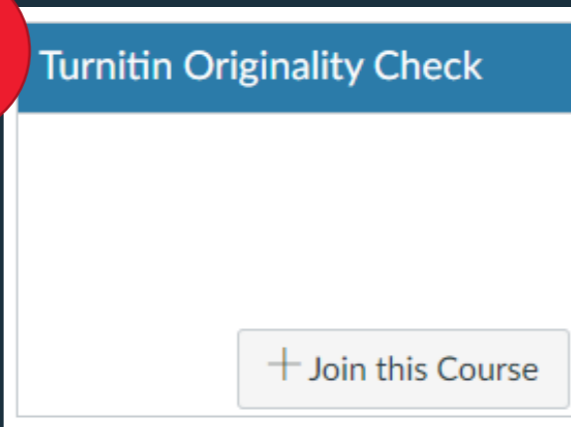


Dashboard

Your enrolled courses appear here once published by your course coordinator. Use Turnitin to check the originality of your draft assignments.

Published Courses (15)


2



Turnitin Originality Check

+ Join this Course

3



turnitin

Submit Here

How to Submit

+ Enroll in the Latest Iteration of the Turnitin Originality Checker

4

	Uploaded	Grade	Similarity
g for children.docx	10 Dec 2021 15:48 ACDT	--	35%

Upload your assignment and then click to view your Similarity report.

How do I use Turnitin?

After uploading your draft, you will receive a **similarity report**.

The similarity report can help you to understand where your paraphrasing or referencing may be insufficient, and give you an opportunity to improve and correct your draft before submission.

You could also take the similarity report to the [Writing Centre](#) for advice on how to develop your skills in integrating sources into your work.

Use the Originality Check a few days before submitting to give yourself time to make changes.



I have my **Similarity Report!** What's next?

Acceptable
matches



Unacceptable
matches



Improving your
work

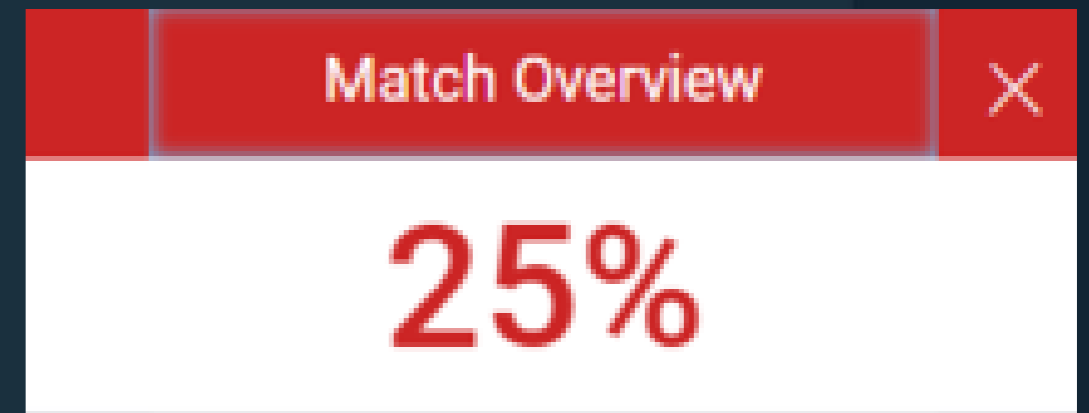


Similarity Score

Your Similarity Report has a score which shows how much of your text has matched to other content.

There is no perfect similarity score that you should aim for.

What matters is what the report shows, and whether you have quoted, paraphrased, and referenced correctly. You have to look at each text match to decide whether it is acceptable.



Acceptable Matches



Because Turnitin performs text-matching rather than plagiarism detection, highlighted text does not always indicate an issue.



Acceptable matching text includes:

- ✓ Quotations which are followed by a reference
- ✓ References and bibliography
- ✓ Matches to assignment templates or cover sheets
- ✓ Table and charts which show copied data, followed by an appropriate reference
- ✓ Common turns of phrase, a match on two or three words of a very generic, phrasal nature e.g. “to sum up”; “on the other hand”
- ✓ Technical terms specific to the discipline that must not be changed
- ✓ Assessment topic related terms and phrases, such as the wording of the question
- ✓ Paraphrasing, if the paraphrase is *sufficiently different* from the original, and the paraphrase is followed by an appropriate reference.



Example: highlighted quotations



subconsciously' (Folkvord 2020, p.5). Although older children and adolescents may be able to identify some of these marketing tactics, 'recognition of persuasive intent is necessary, but not sufficient, to defend against the influence of junk food marketing' (Harris et al. 2020, p.21). As

Turnitin may highlight text which is in quotation marks and includes a full reference, as above. This is an example of acceptable matching text.

While including lots of long quotations in a written assignment is not encouraged, you should ask your tutor about the discipline-specific preference for quotation or paraphrasing.

Unacceptable Matches



Example: Copied Text



The causes of the French Revolution are numerous and complex, and are the subject of debate by many historians. In 1789, France was in turmoil. The country was beset by economic, political, and social issues, all of which had led to the King Louis XVI calling a meeting of the Estates General to bring representatives to bring lists of grievances. The Estates General ultimately began the French Revolution.

The primary reason for calling the Estates General to address the country's economic situation. **Throughout the 18th century, France participated in a series of expensive wars primarily against its long-term rival Great Britain.** In order to pay for the national debt, Louis XVI wanted to persuade the Estates General to raise taxes.



In this example, the highlight seems to indicate that text has been copied **without quotation or proper attribution.**

This is plagiarism.



Example: Incorrect Paraphrasing

and exclusive access to some of France's most tyrannical laws such as the right to imprison someone without trial. On the other hand, the Third Estate comprised all of those who weren't members of either of the above and can be separated into two groups, urban and rural, which altogether made up over 90% of France's population (Wikipedia, 2021).

Sometimes, a highlighted phrase or sentence will be broken up by non-highlighted words, such as the example above.

This shows that the writer has made an insufficient attempt to paraphrase by substituting a few words or by changing the order of the phrases. **Even if the writer has included a reference, this is incorrect paraphrasing and is also plagiarism.**

Improving Your Work



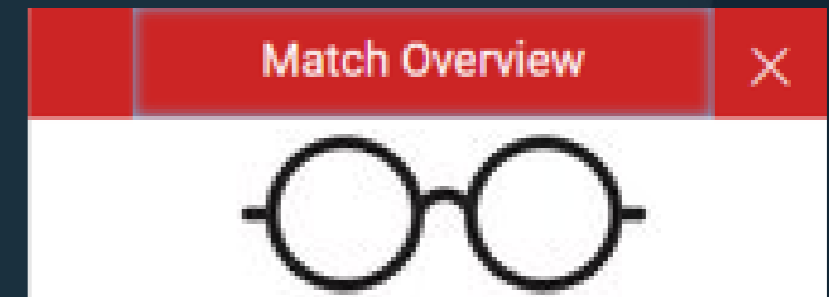
Check your matches

Don't just look at your similarity score.

A very high, very low, or mid-range score can **still include instances of plagiarism** if the matched text is not appropriately quoted or paraphrased, and referenced.

You should check each text match to decide whether it is acceptable or unacceptable.

You can ask the [Writing Centre](#) for help with this.





Improve your paraphrasing

If some of the unquoted text is highlighted, it may be due to an incorrect or insufficient paraphrase.

A paraphrase involves writing somebody else's idea **in your own words**. It is not enough to change a few words or swap the word order around.

Do not move matched words and phrases around and resubmit to Turnitin to try to 'defeat' the text-matching. This is poor academic practice.





Tips for paraphrasing

- 1 Read the text from the source to make sure you understand the concept
- 2 Identify key words which should not be changed (such as technical terms)
- 3 Put the source aside and write the concept out **in your own words**, keeping any key words. Don't forget to include a reference after your paraphrase.

If you need more help with paraphrasing, the Writing Centre has an [online guide](#) with practice examples. You can also [make an appointment](#) with a Learning Advisor at the Writing Centre to practice paraphrasing.

Using other people's ideas

Academic writing encourages the use of other people's ideas.

We use other people's ideas to show that we have done our research and understand the body of knowledge in our discipline.

When you use other people's ideas, don't pretend that they are your own. Use your words **and** references to indicate that you're referring to someone else's work.

e.g. Smith argues that ... (Smith 2020, p.19).

Correctly referencing and effectively integrating other people's ideas can actually help you to **gain marks** in your assessments!



Check your referencing



Whether you are quoting, paraphrasing, or referring to somebody else's idea, you should **always** include a reference directly afterwards.

When you look at the highlighted text in your Turnitin Similarity Report, make sure that each highlighted section is followed by a reference in the correct style.

gh older children and adolescents may be able
ognition of persuasive intent is necessary, but
junk food marketing' (Harris et al. 2020, p.21).

Next, make sure that all of your in-text references are included in your bibliography in the correct style.

The [Library](#) has some very useful referencing guides to help you understand what is required.

Leave time to draft, proofread and edit



To make the most of Turnitin, submit your draft assignment to the Originality Check at least a few days before it is due.

This gives you time to carefully check the Similarity Report and make any changes, including going back over your notes to double check quotes, paraphrases and references.

It also gives you time to ask for advice from the [Writing Centre](#) if you need it, and to make other improvements before you submit.



It is very important to ensure that you have **worked with integrity** and have correctly quoted, paraphrased and referenced. Being in a hurry is not an excuse.



Turnitin Myth

Reality

If my text is not highlighted by Turnitin, then I haven't plagiarised.

There are different types of plagiarism, including copying without correct attribution, paraphrasing incorrectly, and presenting other people's ideas as your own. Although Turnitin highlights a broad range of matches, your marker is an expert on your subject and may identify other pieces of text or ideas which are familiar to them. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to work on your notetaking, paraphrasing, and referencing skills.

There is an 'acceptable' Turnitin score (e.g. 25% or lower) which I should aim for.

There is no perfect Turnitin score. A mid-range Turnitin score still indicates matched text which may be plagiarised. What matters is what the report shows, and whether you have quoted, paraphrased, and referenced correctly. Sometimes high Turnitin scores are fine, and sometimes very low scores still contain signs of plagiarism. You have to look at each text match to determine whether it is acceptable.

I should keep editing and resubmitting my assignment until I reach 0% similarity

You should not try to 'trick' Turnitin by making small edits to avoid text matching: this is poor academic practice. Look at the highlighted text in the report and decide whether you have quoted, paraphrased, and referenced correctly. If your paraphrase is too similar, go back to the original text, reread it, and then put it aside. Then, write your own interpretation of the information in **your voice**. Make sure that you use synonyms, change the structure or grammar, and your own words.

You should not aim for a low similarity score – this can still indicate plagiarism or poor academic practice. Instead, focus on what the text highlights are telling you.

My matched text is referenced, so that's ok

You need to ensure that matched text is in quotation marks, or is a paraphrase which is significantly different from the original text, in addition to including correct referencing.

My tutor uses Turnitin because they don't trust students.

Your tutor uses Turnitin as part of their marking process. It is one of many tools they use (including rubrics) to assess your work and your use of sources and evidence. Turnitin is also a useful learning tool for students. It can help you to improve your academic writing, referencing, and to ensure that you are working with integrity.





Useful Resources

- The Writing Centre: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/writingcentre/>
- Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS): <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/pass/>
- Studiosity: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/student/success/studiosity>
- Library Referencing Support: <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/referencing-support>
- Paraphrasing – What, When & How?
<https://myuni.adelaide.edu.au/courses/48926/pages/lecture-3-paraphrasing-what-when-and-how>
- Academic Integrity Information:
<https://www.adelaide.edu.au/student/success/academic-integrity-for-students>

Have a question about Turnitin or academic integrity?

- [MyUni Support](#) can help you with technical issues
- The [Writing Centre](#) can help you with interpreting your Turnitin similarity report, and advice on improving your writing
- The [Academic Integrity website](#) has resources to help you understand academic integrity expectations and policy

